

ORDER FOR COURT OF IMPEACHMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate convene as a court of impeachment in the trial of Samuel B. Kent on Wednesday, July 22, 2009, and the Secretary of the Senate inform the House of Representatives that the Senate will at that time receive the honorable managers on the part of the House of Representatives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MOON LANDING AND HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to touch the Moon, our Nation rejoiced not just because we were launching a new era of exploration and technology. When the Apollo 11 crew touched down in the Sea of Tranquility, our country cheered more than just a stunning success for science.

When 40 years ago tonight, man first set foot on another world, we celebrated the fact that those first men were Americans.

On the evening of July 20, 1969, millions of Americans watched with Walter Cronkite, who passed away just 3 days ago. As Armstrong leaped off the ladder, the anchorman took care to note that the astronaut was a “38-year-old American.” Because he was an American—a boy scout from Ohio and a pilot in our Navy—we all were proud.

We were proud that an American vehicle was the first manned spacecraft to make it to the Moon’s surface, that an American’s footprint was the first to be pressed upon it, and that our American flag was the first to be planted within it. America was moving mankind forward, and we were proud to be leaders.

But the story of the journey we celebrate today did not begin on the breathtaking night when the Eagle landed.

It began years before: in the imaginations of Americans everywhere, in laboratories and hangars in Florida and Texas, and in a stadium in Houston where President Kennedy told us that we will choose to reach the Moon within the decade and do other great things, “not because they are easy, but because they are hard . . . because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone.”

We now must be willing to accept today’s challenges. We must be willing to accept the challenge of making it easier to live a healthy life in America. We must be unwilling to postpone our responsibility to fix what is broken.

We now have a chance to be proud once again. We have the chance to lead once again, and for our entire Nation to again achieve dramatic goals, like making health care more affordable, more stable and more secure.

America is the last major industrialized nation on the planet that refuses to ensure all of its citizens can get health care. In the greatest country and the largest economy the world has ever seen, hardworking Americans live in fear as they live one accident, one illness, or one pink slip away from losing their health coverage.

How much longer can the country that led the way to space be content to stay in last place? How much longer can we sit this one out? How much longer can we say no?

Our health care system is not healthy. The cost of doing nothing is too high, and not acting is not an option.

The story of the Moon landing did not begin with that one small step for a man, and it did not end there either. President Reagan credited our willingness to reach for new heights with helping our country “recapture its spirit of vitality and confidence.” He pointed to the space program as proof that “the pioneer spirit still flourishes in America.”

Today that spirit must prevail over partisan passions. If we confront this crisis together, we can once again restore the vitality and confidence of America, and of all Americans.

Forty years ago, no political party had a monopoly on the lunar landing. A conservative who looked to the heavens took no less pride in our achievement than did a liberal. It was not a Republican accomplishment or a Democratic accomplishment. It was an American accomplishment.

As we said at the beginning of this year, our strong preference is to fix health care as one collaborative Congress, not as two competing parties. As we have said throughout this debate, we will continue to work with the other side in good faith and we want to pass a bipartisan bill.

I remain optimistic that both Republicans and Democrats recognize how urgent this is. The health of our citizens and our economy are at stake, and neither will be able to recover if we are unwilling to accept this challenge.

When we make it easier for people to stay healthy—when we make it easier for people to afford to care for their loved ones—when we choose to do what is right, what is necessary and what is overdue—not because it is easy, but because it is hard—we will once again proudly rejoice together, as Americans.

VETERANS VOTING SUPPORT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased today to join with Senators Feinstein and Kerr and others to reintroduce the Veterans Voting Support Act. This legislation will enable the Nation to better preserve and protect the fundamental right to vote for veterans in facilities operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Our men and women in uniform have risked their lives to serve our country and spread democracy around the globe. We

must do all we can to protect their right to participate in the democratic process when they return home.

When we introduced this legislation last Congress, I had hoped that it could be signed into law before last year’s historic election. Millions of Americans went to the polls last November and yet far too many of our wounded warriors were left behind. That is wrong, and I hope the Senate will consider this important legislation to remedy the disenfranchisement of our disabled veterans. Senators FEINSTEIN and KERRY, the respective Chairpersons of the Rules and Foreign Relations Committees, have been leaders on this important issue.

Today, veterans of the armed services who reside in a VA facilities face a voting rights crisis. Far too often in recent years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has neglected to assist veterans with voting, or to allow nonpartisan groups access to VA facilities to register voters. Until last year, for example, the VA’s national policy was silent on whether it could provide support to wounded warriors seeking to vote. There have also been reports that the Department of Veterans Affairs may have even prohibited its own staff from providing voter assistance to veterans in VA hospitals. In addition, since 2004, reports indicate that the VA has often sided in Federal court against allowing nonprofit voter registration organizations access to VA run facilities.

I welcome the recent strides the Department of Veterans Affairs has made to correct its flawed policies, but it has not gone far enough. I am glad that last year, the Department changed its policy from a blanket prohibition against voter registration efforts to one that would permit its patients to register to vote. That change, however, was only a first step. We need legislative action to ensure that these changes are permanent and complete. For example, I remain concerned that the VA’s voter registration policy stops short of mandating that VA facilities offer disabled veterans a chance to register to vote. To paraphrase Paul Sullivan, the Executive Director of Veterans for Common Sense, the new policy directive only changed the Department from being in active opposition to veterans’ voter registration to passively supporting it. It is common sense that the Department of Veterans Affairs should make services available to wounded veterans who reside in VA facilities and yet face hardships in traveling off campus to register to vote. This legislation will ensure that VA facilities have an affirmative duty to provide our wounded warriors with access to, and assistance with, voter registration materials in the same way they help veterans fill out other forms.

The Veterans Voting Support Act we introduce today would also require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide voter registration forms to veterans whenever they enroll in, or make changes to, their status under the VA